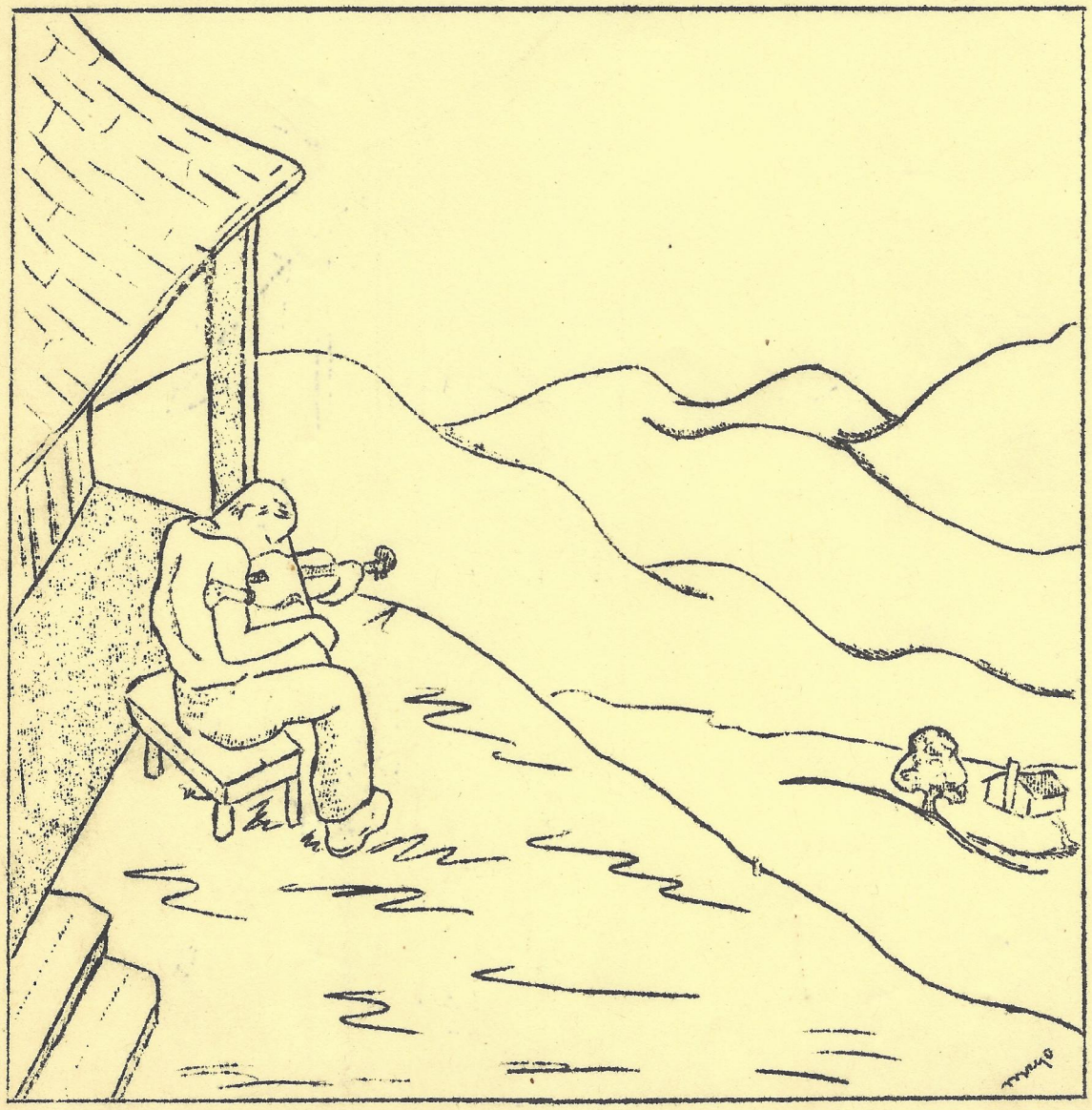
PROMENADE

A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN FOLKLORE

VOLUME V ISSUE 2-3



THE AMERICAN SQUARE DANCE GROUP
NEW YORK, N.Y.

"The purpose of the American Square-Dance Group is to make available those rich stores of native dance, music, drama and general Americana which together comprise American folk culture; to conduct such activities without regard for race, creed, color or social position; to cooperate with those who hold similar views."
Constitution of the A S D G.

PROMENADE

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assisted by
Stuart Jamieson
Barbara Altstadt
Bob Tunick
Peter Sussman

There is a tendency, on the part of new-comers to the folk field, to assume that folklore is a snap subject, requiring no training or preparation. These discoverers of folklore realize the value of the recreation angle, and plunge madly ahead into leadership.

The modern age of stream-lining and speed-up has enveloped this field, as it has all others and now we have the "learn to call in five minutes" school with plenty of disciples, unfortunately. Naturally, it is possible for anyone with a fair amount of intelligence to memorize the words of a dance or a song. But to become a leader or teacher in the folk field means to my way of thinking, to become a representative of the people, not only our people, but those of the mother-countries from which our traditions and lore came. And that feeling for the people cannot be acquired in five minutes. It comes with knowing them, with sympathy for and understanding of the traditions, the work problems, the conditions under which these folk live. It means studying the background of our people, whence they came and why. Not that you have to deliver a lecture every time you call square dances or sing folk songs, but the background must be in your blood, and the people in your heart.

These new "leaders" apparently feel no compunctions in changing the words and tunes of time-honored ballads and square dance calls. The excuse offered is "that these must be changed in order to appeal to city folks." The result too often is pure corn, insulting to the intelligence of the city-dweller as well as the country people from whom the lore sprang.

Don't misunderstand me. When a situation demands the composing of a new song to rally people around a worthy cause, I'm all for it. I know full well how quickly a folk tune can be assimulated, and feel very strongly that this type of song is by far the best for group singing. But, it is a simple matter to compose in the folk idiom and when new songs are needed, new tunes or more popular older ones can be used. I find no excuse for taking the really fine old ballads and putting modern words to them.

If the time has come when the dances should be changed, then by all means, let's change them. But let's give them a new title, and admit that these are modern and representative of only one small segment of the people, not of the

(continued on next page)

people as a whole.

I am equally opposed to those scholars who approach folklore as a sacred trust, to be shrouded in musty phrases and buried beneath profound solemn statements. Folk lore is alive, it grows as knowledge of the people grows. Folklore is composed of many elements and is not separate from everyday life but a real part of it. Folklore is fear, courage, superstition, basic honesty. It is current and ancient history; it is the humor of generations , the sorrow of ages.

To cheapen folklore is to cheapen the people. To wrap it up and deposit it in libraries and museums preserves it for future generations, but deprives the present of the pleasure and growth to be obtained from folklore. Let's get together, and strike a happy medium somewhere in between these two extremes!

Margot

FOLKLORE CONFERENCE

The all-day conference on "Folklore in the Metropolis" was held at the Elizabeth Irwin High School on May 4th. Dr. Ben Botkin and Herbert Halpert led the morning discussions of living folklore in the city and its relationship to rural folksay. During the lunch period Alan Lomax sang some chain gang songs and Charity Bailey sang two lovely spirituals in a high, sweet voice. A tall, lanky fellow, came in, and with his first notes we recognized Tom Scott, who knows a Kentucky version of almost any New England song you can name.

The afternoon session was opened by Ruth Rubin, who illustrated her paper on "Yiddish Folksongs in New York City" with songs. Her warm sense of humor, her charm and her respect for her material was contageous. Mrs. Svatova Jakobson appeared next to tell us of her experiences in collecting Czechoslovakian folklore in Europe and in New York. Margot Mayo discussed the square dance in New York, and on a sudden inspiration, called for four couples from the audience to demonstrate a square dance. The audience warmed to the informality and looked eager to participate. Pete Seeger closed the session with a talk about how Peoples Songs, Inc. was born.

The evening program was attended by a capacity audience, eager to hear Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger, Alan Lomax and others. The Armenian folk dance group, led by Mary Eretryan, performed with skill and charm. But, in our opinion, Frank Warner was the prize performer of the evening. It would be difficult to equal Frank's awful, awful vengeance when he sings a Rebel song!

This year's conference reached a large number of people, who came to gather ideas and material. This second annual conference has established a precedent and we feel that there should be many more and more often.

Freddy Simon.

OUT WEST

When I returned to Denver in December, after having spent nearly five years in Washington, D. C. I found that my duties at the University of Denver would keep me rather busy. As a result, my hobby has been somewhat neglected. I do hope to become active again in the square dance field in the near future.

The square dancing in Denver is fast and fiery. There are many excellent dancers and callers. Probably nowhere do dancers enjoy dancing as much as in the high and dry West. There is practically no discomfort from high temperature or humidity and the Western dance goes on throughout the summer out of doors. Most of the dancing here is limited to Western squares, a few singing calls, which the dancers happen to like, and the Western couple dances, many of which are splendid dances. But one seldom, if ever, finds a group that will do Hull's Victory, the Virginia Reel, or an Appalachian Running Set. Most of the European dances are unheard of, but their counterparts are frequently danced as a "Western" dance.

x I have long been intrigued by the costumes and the style of the modern Western dances. I have seen few spectacles that I considered more beautiful or impressive than the dances held outdoors in Denver and Colorado Springs during the summer. There are several hundred dancers, all in costume, and many many more observers. If you have never seen any of these dances, I do hope that you will soon find an opportunity to witness some and to dance some of them.

To me, the Western dance today presents a truely composite picture of the American folk dance. It seems quite obvious that many traditional aspects must have been dropped in the evolution of this modern, stream-lined version of the Western cowboy dance. If the modern exponents have sacrificed tradition, it doesn't seem objectionable to me. This type of dance has real beauty and human appeal, and it serves its purpose well. It is, therefore, fully justified and is of genuine value.

Kenneth L. Smith

From California comes the news, through Lucile Czarnowski, President of the Folk Dance Federation of California, that, "folk dancing is continuing its steady growth in California. At the December Festival we had about six hundred dancers on the floor...all in costume, of course, and with a gallery full of spectators. It was held in the large Oakland Civic Auditorium. All of our monthly folk festivals fill the space to capacity."

And from Santa Maria, California, another subscriber to "Promenade" sends in this information. "Our group, known as the 'Do C Do Dance Club' recently affiliated with the Folk Dance Federation of California. Our size is limited to 25 couples. Recently I had the opportunity of attending one of the Federation's Festivals in Oakland, and was so impressed that I returned home determined to make Santa Maria folk dance conscious. First I went to work on the city Recreation head with the result that we were able to sponsor a dance and demonstration by members of the Redwood City Docey Do Dance Club, under the leadership of Mrs Mildred Buhler. They presented 27 numbers in our Veteran's Memorial Hall. It was a big success, with all the seats taken and people lining the walls. All comments were favorable. The Recreation Dept. is now sponsoring a class in folk dancing, which I am leading until I can pass the torch on to someone else. The indications are that the class will grow and be permanent.

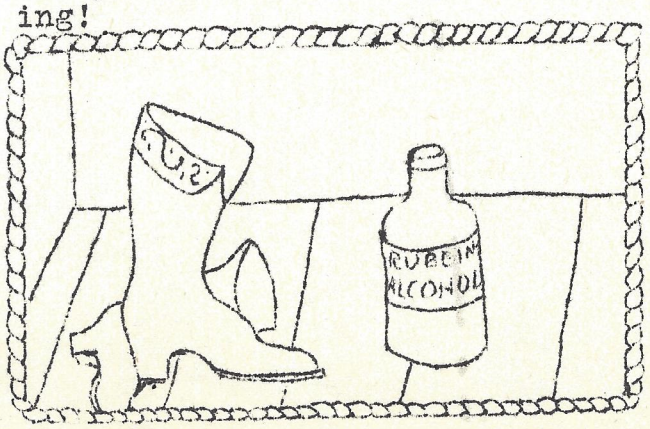
May 11 will see an All California Folk Dance Festival at Ojai. Dancing will start at 5 and continue until 11. Members of the Bay area are charting busses to make the trip and plan to sleep in the park after the dance. I intend to bring about 10 couples with me.

Do you think Decca will ever get around to putting out any more of your albums? We have three of them and would like the fourth. We liked the Polo Quadrille so much that we presented it before the local chapter of the Native Daughters of the Golden West on April 30th, and it was very well received."

Stephen J. Fairchild

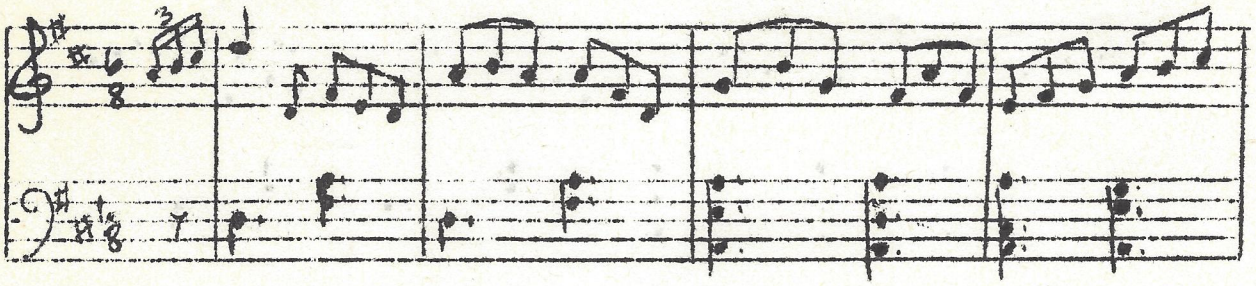
We wish we could assure you-all that Decca is going to get on the ball soon, but the only thing to do is to write them and suggest that people are still interested in the square dance!

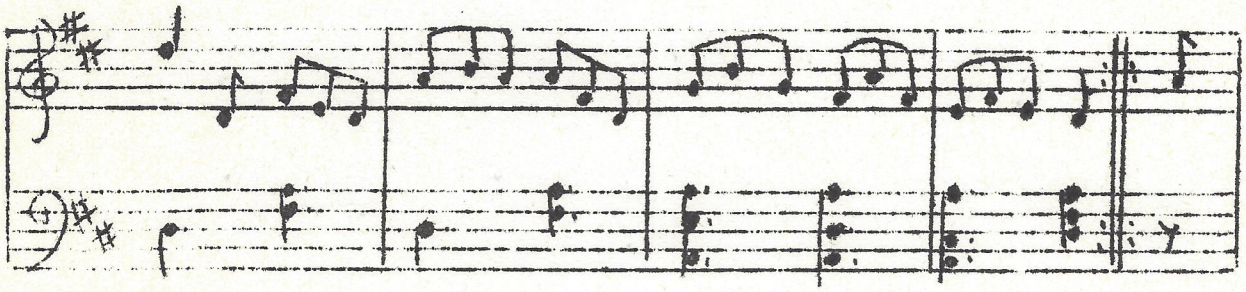
Thanks, all you subscribers for sending us news of your activities and please keep the letters coming!

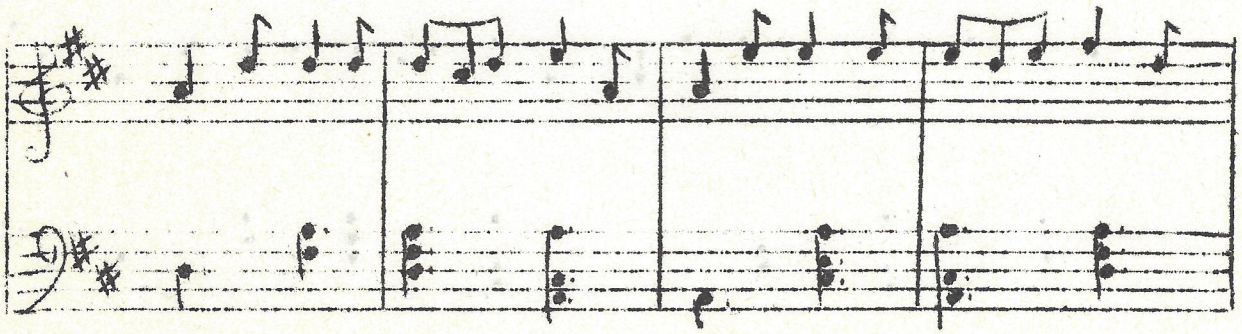


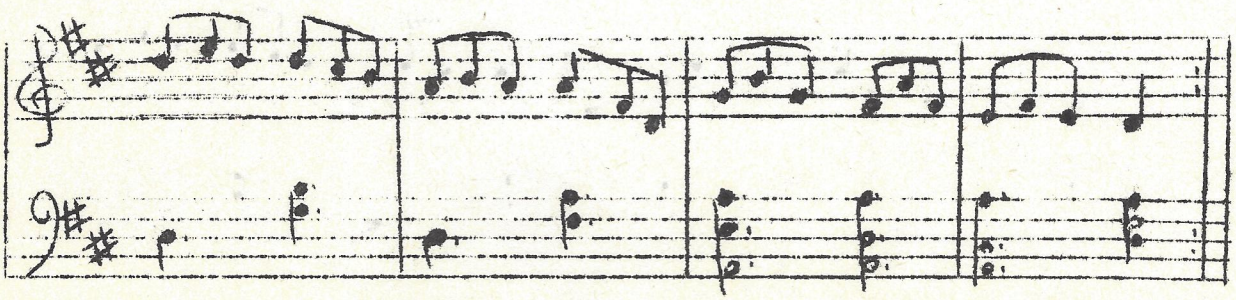
LARRY O'GAFF

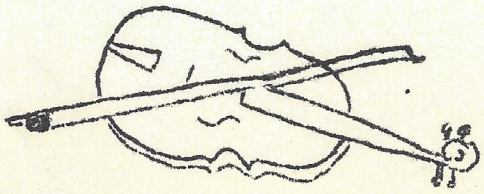
This traditional square dance tune is particularly good for New England square dances and quadrilles. As usual, we give you a skeletal arrangement and expect you to supply the rest.











GEORGIA SQUARE DANCE

This dance was collected by Alan Swartz in Swaynesboro , Georgia. " They announce square dances to be held on Thursdays and Saturdays, and round dances on Friday evenings." The dances have no names , since they are nearly always the same figures , arranged in different order. They don't " count off " for odd and even couples . When the caller is dancing he and his partner become head couple, moving out to the right and the other couples automatically follow suit, performing the figure until all couples are paired off. If the caller isn't dancing, he must designate a head couple.

Formation: a large circle of partners.
Music: any Southern square dance tune, like "Old Joe Clark".

Calls: 1) Circle left, halfway, then circle back to place.

2) Balance in.

3) Swing your corners. Gents go back and swing your honey babe.

4) Right hand star, and back with the left.

5) Ladies cross, break with partners, swing opposites, now your own.

6) One large circle, round to the left.

7) Ladies bridge and gents duck under , lift 'em high and duck back under. Ladies circle right and gents circle left.

8) Stop on the left hand side of your partner, gents duck under and circle right. Balance in.

9) Ladies in , back and give your honey a swing . And now we'll call it quits.

Description: 1) All join hands and circle left halfway 'round , then circle back to original places.
2) All walk four steps to center, starting with right foot, and then back four steps.
3) Swings are done in regular dance position with short , jerky steps like a choo-choo engine.
4) Head and every other couple joins right hands with the pair on their right and circle clockwise. all turn out, put left hand in and circle counter-clockwise.
5) Ladies pass between opposite couple and facing out , join hands. All circle clockwise. Holding right hands with corner lady, gents pass left shoulders and backs. Meet partner with left hand, pass on and swing corner and then partner.
6) Form original circle and circle left.
7) Ladies form inside circle, gents outside. Ladies raise hands and gents go through to left of partner still holding hands. Circle left. Gents back out and circle left,and ladies right.
8) Circle halfway around and gents duck under.Circle right.Stop and take four steps to center of circle and back again.
9) Drop hands . Ladies balance in and out and swing partners.

My friend, Mrs. Virgie Thomas, of Staten Island, wrote out this story for us, using the spelling which seemed most to fit the pronunciations of the people who told her the little folk-tale. We are presenting it without any editorial changes. Mrs Thomas was born in the West Indies and has traveled practically all over the world. She has spent a great deal of time in the South. This event took place in 1924.

Margot

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MAM SUE TAKES A CAR RIDE.

Over in Norfolk, Va. lived an old slave by the name of Susan Wade. At the age of 80 had never rode in a oto car so her eyes was getting bad she had quite a number of children, so one day one of her sons had put wet tea leaves on her eyes and when removed she said son you will have to take me to a doctor. So the family talked it over and told her that there was a Dr. over on the other side but how to get her thir was the quiston. So one of the boys said, "I know what less get a pair of dark glasses for Mam Sue, that was the name she were call by. They had to cross a river and she was afrid of water so they put on dark glasses and blind fold her. Put her in the car and on the boat they went. So when on the other side they said, "Take the blind fold off, but leave the glasses on. So Mama Sue said what am I riding in? Not one of those devil chasers? And the ansor was that what you are in Mama Sue Wade is an old church. Grarmama Sue stood to try and pray. The car was running over some bumpy ruts in the dirt rode. Mama Sue would morme "I'm a stranger here. Heven is my home. I'm a stranger here, Heven is my home."

As the car moved over another bump...came another morn from Mama Sue, "Nearer my God to Thee, nearer to Thee." 15 miles futher, bump again and Mama Sue started to sing again. "I'm nearing the port and will soon be home." A very huge bump this time and Mama Sue morned "When the roll is called up yonder I'll be there."

When the car turned the corner a little fast Mama Sue said "Lord, I am coming home." When the last mile was finished, Mama Sue prayed "Take Thou me, Lord."

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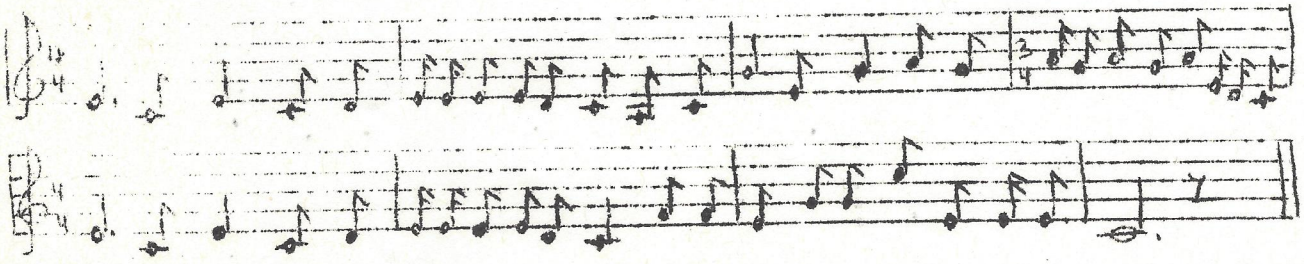
I'M SO GLAD



1) I'm so glad my troubles don't last alway (repeat twice)
Oh my Lord, oh my Lord, what shall I do?

2) I'm so glad that Jesus done die for me (repeat twice)
Oh my Lord, oh my Lord, what shall I do?

3) Soon-a one morning, Death'll come knocking at yo' door (repeat twice)
Oh my Lord, oh my Lord, what shall I do?

Margot collected this fragment from a Negro lady in Virginia and it is very possible that Mam Sue knew this old religious folk song!

SUGGESTED FARE FOR SUMMER FOLKLORE TEACHERS

"SING AND DANCE"

by
Beatrice A. Hunt & Harry R. Wilson

Hall McCreary Co. Chicago

"Sing and Dance" is a collection of singing games, play party games and folk dances, American and European. An invaluable aid to teacher and camp counsellor, the book has dances, descriptions and music on facing pages. Each tune has words that can be sung while dancing, making instrumental accompaniment unnecessary. We cannot vouch for the authenticity of the words for some of the tunes, but they serve their purpose well.

Folk dancers will recognize many favorites, such as "Crested Hen", "Oh Susanna" and others, and will be interested in the lesser-known ones.

The book is well written with a good format and binding. The illustrations by Corina Melcher-Collier deserve mention, as they are charming and original.

"GIT ONBOARD"

by
Beatrice Landeck

Edward B. Marks Corp. New York

This collection of folk songs, topical, old, modern, European and American, should prove of great help to camp counsellors. Compiled by Beatrice Landeck, with an introduction by Norman Studer, of Camp Woodland, the book seems designed for camp use. The songs are arranged for mixed chorus, with a few exceptions, and can be useful for serious choral study or for informal community singing.

The songs range from patriotic and political songs, such as "Chee Lai" and "The Peatbog Soldiers" to old folk songs and square dance tunes, such as "Paper of Pins" and "Sourwood Mountain".

"SONGS OF THE HILLS and PLAINS"

by
Harry Robert Wilson

This is a collection of songs and play-party games well known to searchers in the folk field. The auther has arranged the book with the constant thought of city-folk who are becoming interested in the songs of the cowboys, mountaineers and pioneers of the past and present.

Mr. Wilson claims that these are authentic versions, but acknowledges the fact that other versions are equally genuine. He has arranged the songs in sinsable fashion with accompaniments for either piano or fretted instruments. Several classifications of songs are presented in this book, including children's songs, mountain songs, pioneer songs and cowboy songs.

If you need material for teaching or for informal singing, this is a good book to have in your library. The publisher is Hall-McCreary Co., Chicago.

"FOLK DANCES FROM NEAR and FAR"

Folk Dance Federation of California.

This book, volume 1 of the Federation's publications, represents a year's work by the Research Committee of the Folk Dance Federation.

Presenting some two dozen dances the book lists material that may easily be purchased, or located in most libraries.

There are excellent descriptions of dance positions at the front of the book, which make the dances in the book very easy to follow.

The dances themselves are presented in a simple manner with instructions that are clear and concise. There is a short history of each dance, diagrams and listings of piano and recorded music.

Watch for these New Records

TOM GLAZER

Keynote is releasing an album of folk-songs, with Tom Glazer and his guitar. The album should hit the market sometime in July. Tom sings some of the old-time favorites, such as "Waly Waly" and "The Twelve Days of Christmas" and the John Niles versions of "Go Way From My Window". He has also recorded "Blow the Candles Out"! The album is called "Olden Songs" and from one pre-release hearing, I guess that the album is going to be a good'un.

JOSH WHITE

Another Keynote release is the Josh White recordings in an album called "Strange Fruit". Haven't heard it yet, but Josh is Josh and a pretty safe buy, even without hearing the records. I understand that the "rendering" of the song is in the original Josh White mode of singing, not in the night club style he developed during his long stay at "Cafe Society."

ASDG SQUARE DANCE ALBUM

August is the month scheduled for our new square-dance album of dances from the Northeastern section of our country. The calls are by Manny, who made the Decca albums with us several yea rs ago.

The dances in this album are a bit more complicated than those generally released on recordings, and should prove useful to those who are interested in dancing demonstration numbers. "Chicken Reel" from Conn.- "Silent Couple" from Mass.- "Preakness Quadrille" from N.J.- "Double Chassez" from N.Y. and "New Portland Fancy" another dance from Mass. are recorded on five of thesides of ten inch re cords, while an uncalled medley of square-dance tunes makes up the last side. Dancers from the group danced during the actual recording of this album, to assure correct timing of the music and the calls. We hope you'll like the album and find it of value.

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SINGIN' YANKEES

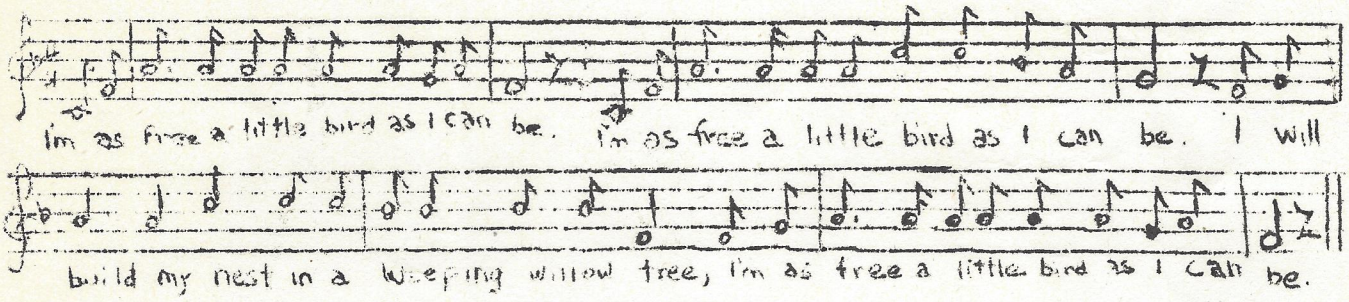
Philip D. Jordan
University of Minn. Press,
Minneapolis, Minn. 1946

It's about time someone put the singing family troupes of the last century into a readable book, and Philip Jordan has done just that! "Singin' Yankees" is the story of one of the most colorful and famous of the troupes that traveled around our young country singing topical songs, sentimental songs, funny songs, religious and temperance songs. The orignal Hutchinson Family, sturdy children of the New Hampshire soil, consisted of four brothers and their younger sister Abby. At various times, however, other members of the family joined the troup or founded other singing groups.

The singing Yankees popularity rose and waned through some of the most historic of our nation's history. Beginning with local concerts in their immediate neighborhood, during the early 1840's, the Hutchinsons continued their crusading, tumultuous career through the Civil War, and by the 1880's, there were two generations of the family "treading the boards". Travel took the little family over most of our country, and to the British Isles, and "Singin' Yankees" pictures their 19th century with sympathetic understanding.

The book is charming, with its quaint pictures and program bills, with its constant reference to the famous songs which are part of our heritage. It seems to us to lack some of the humor, the delightful, sensitive humor of Prof. Jordan's other fine contribution to American folk-song, "Songs of Yesteryear", which he co-authored with Lillian Kessler. Perhaps it was the 19th century conversation that stifled the author's sense of humor. But in spite of this small criticism, we found "Singin' Yankees" a book that refused to be put aside until the last page was finished. It is a book that we'll constantly return to, for information and for relaxation.

FREE LITTLE BIRD



Not all the collecting of folk songs has to be done in rural places or mountain cabins. There are lots of unrecorded folk songs floating around New York City.

One night my mother was reminiscing about her childhood in China where she was born. Her father was a Tennessee mountaineer, turned Missionary, who lugged his five-string banjo all the way to Tibet. She started talking about "Grandpa" and singing some of the songs that he had sung when she was a child. I suddenly woke up and grabbed paper and pencil, and began "collecting". The folk singer proved very cooperative, and even noted down the tunes (owing to the collector's musical illiteracy). And in Mother's own words, here is the story of how she learned these two songs:

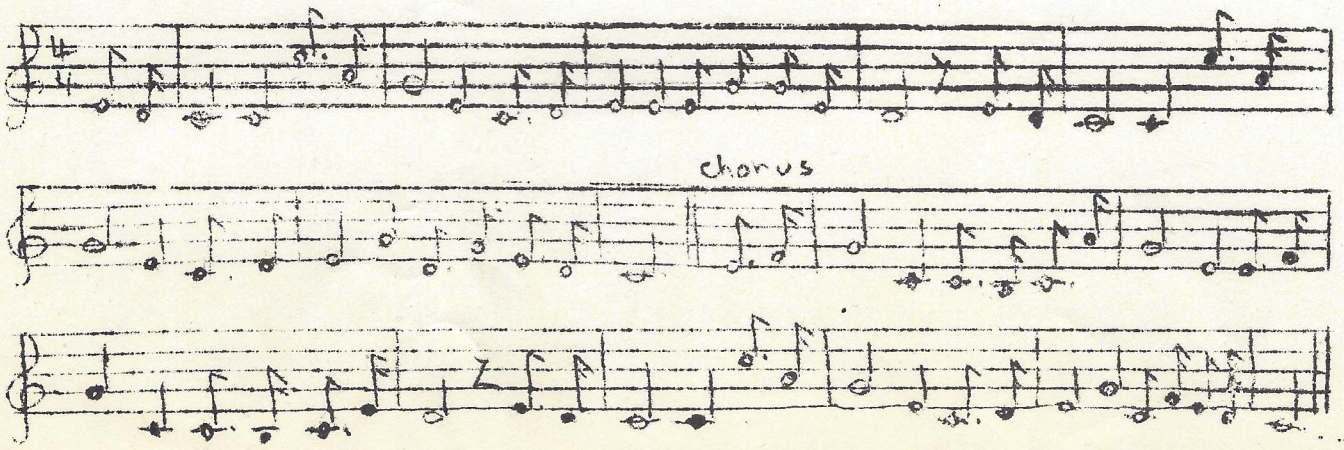
"My father used to sing to us when we were children in China. One of the first things I remember was wondering what the 'weeping willow tree' in 'Free Little Bird' looked like. We were on a houseboat being pulled up the Han River by manpower. My father used to sing and play his five-string banjo when we went to bed. Well, when we finally arrived in Kansu, way up on the border of Tibet, after being pulled upriver for three months, I saw hundreds of weeping willows.

"Grandpa used to sing a hymn called 'Are You Staying?'. He said that he had picked it up when he was a child, back in Tennessee. He never saw it in print. It sounds like a camp-meeting hymn, the tune might even be Scottish."

Now, all you folk collectors, get pencil and paper and corner your parents and learn their songs. And let us know how you make out.

Stuart Jamieson

ARE YOU STAYING?



ARE YOU STAYING? (Cont'd.)

I. Are you staying, safely staying, in the tender Shepherd's peaceful fold?
No, I'm straying, sadly straying, on the lonely mountains, dark and cold.

Cho: On your ear his gentle voice is falling, as He seeks you wheresoe'er you roam,
Hear him calling, sweetly calling, as He bids his wand'ring sheep come home.

II. Are you hearing, gladly hearing, as He bids his flock and fold rejoice?
No, I'm fearing, sadly fearing, I have followed farther stranger's voice.

III. Are you roaming, longer roaming, in the cold, dark night of doubt and sin?
No, I'm coming, gladly coming; open, door, make haste to let me in.

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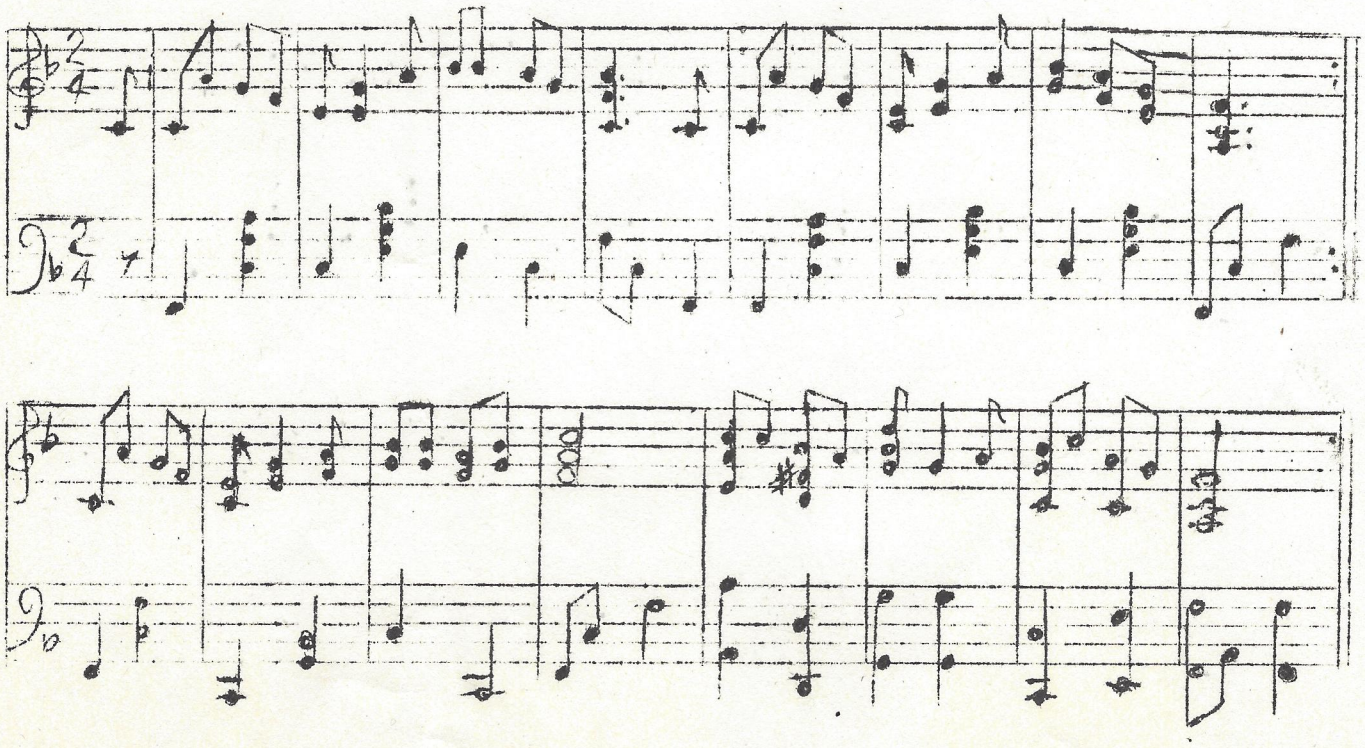
LIFE ON THE OCEAN WAVE

From Jean Parker. of Hillsdale, Columbia County, New York.



LIFE ON THE OCEAN WAVE

From Peggy Riesner of Boston, Mass.

MUSIC: Life on the Ocean Wave - in this issue.

FORMATION: Square Set.

INTRODUCTION: Honor your partners, honor your corners, and all join hands and circle left.

DANCE: 1) First two ladies over, and by the opposite stand,

2) The second two ladies over, and take the young man's hand.

3) Bow to your partners one and all

4) And with your corner swing. Swing your corner lady round,

5) And promenade the hall.

6) The first two gents give right hand round and keep your steps in time.

7) Back with the left, take hold in the center and balance the four in line,

8) Break in the center, half around and balance the line again,

9) A center break, swing partner to place and those two ladies chain.

(Calls 6 to 9 inclusive, are repeated for the side gents.)

The whole dance is repeated until all the dancers are in their original positions. That means that calls 1 to 9, and 6 to 9, are done four times.

EXPLANATION

1) The first and third ladies exchange places, passing to the left of each other.

2) The second and fourth ladies exchange places.

3) Simple!

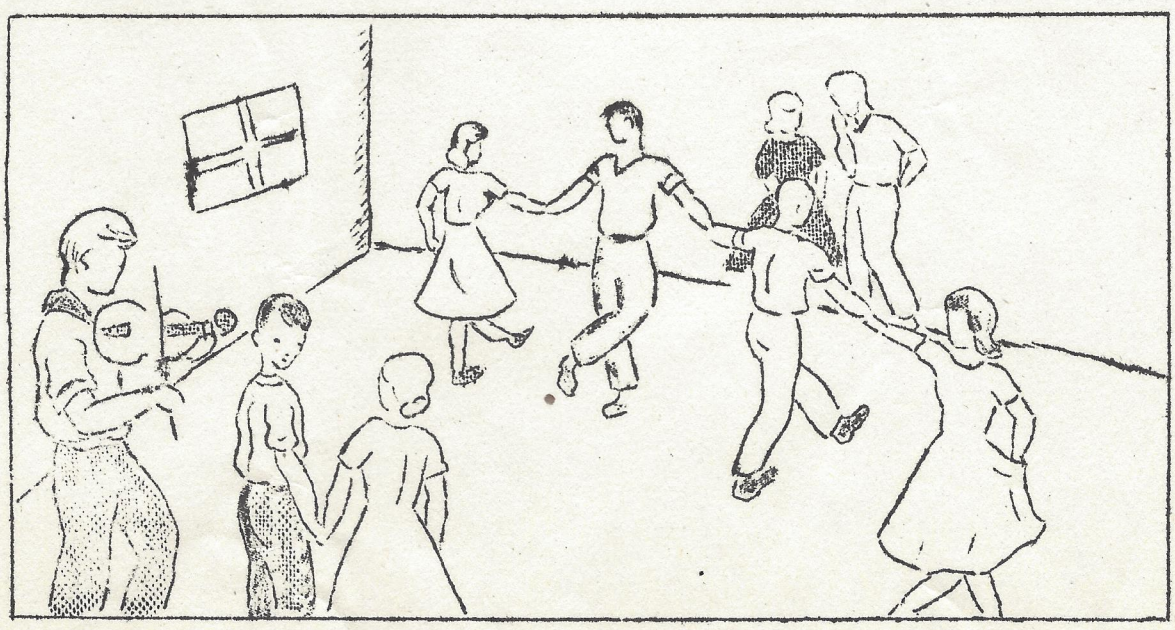
4) Gents take the ladies on their left, hold them in the regular dance position, but at their right sides, and turn with short, quick walking steps.

5) Gents place the ladies they have just swung at their right sides, hold the ladies' right hands in their right, and left hands in left ha nds, and walk around the set in a counterclockwise direction, halting in the gents' place.

6) The first two gents join right hands and walk around each other one and a half times.

7) The same gents join left hands and walk one and a half times around each other in the opposite direction, as fast as they can. Then they take their partner's right hands in their own. (The gents still hold left hands.) The four dancers will then be in line, with partners facing in opposite directions. The four then hop on their right feet a nd swing their left feet in front of the right. Then they hop on their left feet and swing their right feet in front of the left.

8) The gents let go of each other's hands, then each couple turns halfway round, the ladies ending up on the inside of the set. The ladies then join left hands and all balance with the hop-swing step again.

9) The ladies break, and partners swing with each other. When the call "chain" comes, the two ladies cross the set, giving right hands to each other as they pass. They then place their left hands in the opposite gent's left hands and place their right hands on their waists, palm out. The gents place their right hands in the ladies' right hands, and the couples turn; the gents backing up and the ladies walking forward. The ladies again pass each other, touching right hands, and are turned by their own partners, in the same manner.

Figures 6 to 9 are repeated immediately with the side couples doing the figures. Then the whole dance is repeated three times, at which time everyone should be in his original place.